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MOSCOW NEWS

Collective Farmers Rally To Dig Irrigation Canal

160,000 Volunteers From Central Asia Complete
270-Km. Watercourse in Single Month;
Irrigates Nearly 1,250,000 Acres

By S. ALTMAN

A 270-KM. irrigation canal, involving the excavation of 18 million cubic meters of earth, was dug in the month of August in the Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan, Central Asia. The job was accomplished by the joint effort of 160,000 collective farmers of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan under the supervision of 2,000 engineers and technicians.

An area of nearly 1,250,000 acres of arid land will, as a result, receive life-giving water, assuaging an age-old thirst. The canal's benefits will accrue to 24 districts of Ferghana Valley and four districts of Tajikistan. In addition, five Uzbekistan cities will gain a plentiful supply of water for their population.

A story is told that years ago a popular hero gathered together several hundred poor peasants and commenced to build a canal. Misfortune and privation were too much for them, however. Many died of hunger and others were imprisoned for their daring. The hero himself went insane, dying while digging.

"Water is blood" is an old saying of the peoples of Central Asia. Much blood flowed in conflicts over the scarce water in the Central Asian countries. For ages the toilers on the land in those countries have dreamed of the life-giving fluid, and now their dreams are coming true. They can already see the new flourishing cotton and grain fields, pastures, orchards and vineyards.

THE STORY of how the canal came to be built is an epic in itself.

collective farmers in another part of that republic dug on their own initiative a 32-km. canal, known as the Lyagan, in 17 days. Ordinarily such a job would have taken a year and cost some three million rubles.

When, at the end of May and early in June, the scorching heat in Ferghana Valley began to wilt the young cotton plants, talk arose spontaneously of the need to build a great canal, one for the entire valley. The idea spread like wildfire.

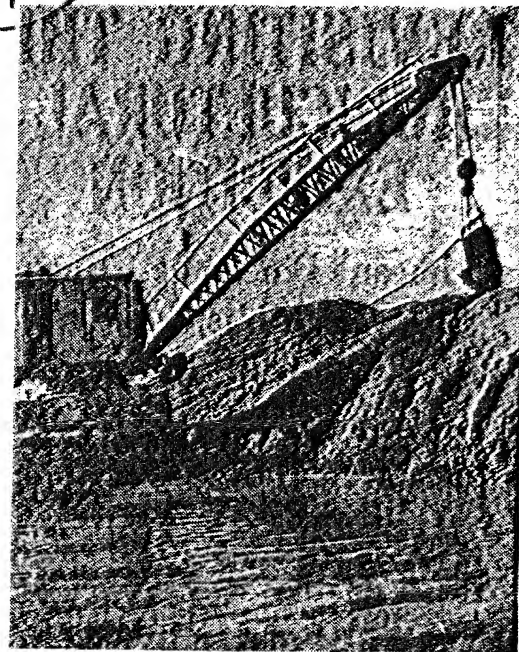
"For hundreds of years the people have dreamed of a great canal to be fed by the waters of the Naryn," recalled old men. "Let us send a trusted man to Stalin to seek his counsel."

The plan taken to Stalin by their envoy was approved by the former, who promised Government aid. "Stalin has given his approval—water will flow," was the happy phrase heard everywhere as the news swiftly reached every nook and corner of the valley.

The governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan promptly appointed a special board for supervising the building of the canal. Forty old men who have charge of the distribution of water in Central Asia were called together for consultation. They advised that work be started on Aug. 1, the beginning of the *tamasha*, the traditional holiday lasting a month in celebration of the ripening of melons.

True, in August cotton is still to be earthed up and watered, but nothing can stop the Uzbek collective farmers from their great gatherings every evening after work during that month. What could be more fun, however, than for 150,000 or 160,000 persons from 100 villages to take part together in the *tamasha* after work! Thus it was decided to combine the building of the canal with the traditional holiday.

Last year collective farmers in Pap District, Uzbekistan, experiencing a dire shortage of water, built a nine-kilometer canal for irrigating 1,500 acres of land. Their effort was so successful that early last spring



EXCAVATORS like the one shown above were widely employed on the construction job
—Photo by Shaikhet

When the arrangements became known, the response was tremendous. Tens of thousands of collective farmers, young and old, expressed their desire to participate in the work.

Even rejection by a medical commission which examined volunteers did not stop many of them from taking part in building the canal. Many an elderly person so rejected tried in every way to be permitted to join in the work.

There is, for instance, the case of 62-year-old collective farmer Jurayev who, upon being rejected by a medical commission, asked for and received permission to look over the section near his collective farm. At night he dug a well and chopped down some trees, and in the morning when several of his friends came to the section he said to them proudly: "You see, the doctor was wrong. I can work as well as anybody."

The following is typical of the replies to a questionnaire sent out by the construction job bureau to collective farms: "We are ready to furnish up to 60% of our able-bodied members for work on the

canal. Advise at once the section and volume of work assigned to us so that we may make preparations."

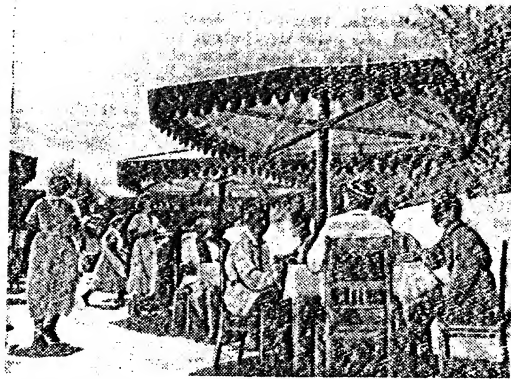
"Two hundred and fifty members, including 90 women, have signed up for work on the canal," read the message from the Stalin Collective Farm at Uch-Kurgan. "The farm has set aside 10 rams and four cows for feeding the builders. Will furnish 50 spades and 50 wheelbarrows."

And here is another message, that from the Stalin Collective Farm in Lenin District: "On our farm 502 persons have signed up for work on the canal. Shall furnish 1,000 pickaxes, 700 spades and 300 wheelbarrows, which are being produced in a shop opened for the purpose. Will also give 20 horses. For feeding canal builders we have allocated 10 rams, 6 head of cattle, 70 ponds of flour and 50 of rice. Before starting work on the canal we will earth up the cotton seven times. The schedule assigned us for a month will be accomplished in 10 to 12 days, it has been decided by our meeting. Otherwise we could not bear the name of Stalin without shame. Respectfully, Tursun Khalikov, chairman of the collective farm."

ON AUG. 1, 160,000 collective farmers, engineers and technicians, physicians, artists, librarians and lecturers commenced the great work throughout the Ferghana Valley, completing the excavation work on Aug. 31, exactly on schedule. Labor heroism and valor were displayed from the very first day. Socialist emulation yielding remarkable results was evident everywhere.

Thus the first phase of the great "Stalinist construction," so named by the builders, has been completed.

By the end of the year, when Uzbekistan celebrates its 15th anniversary as a Soviet Socialist republic, the Naryn will gush into the canal a mighty stream of water, that life-giving fluid of which the toiling people of Central Asia have dreamed through the ages.



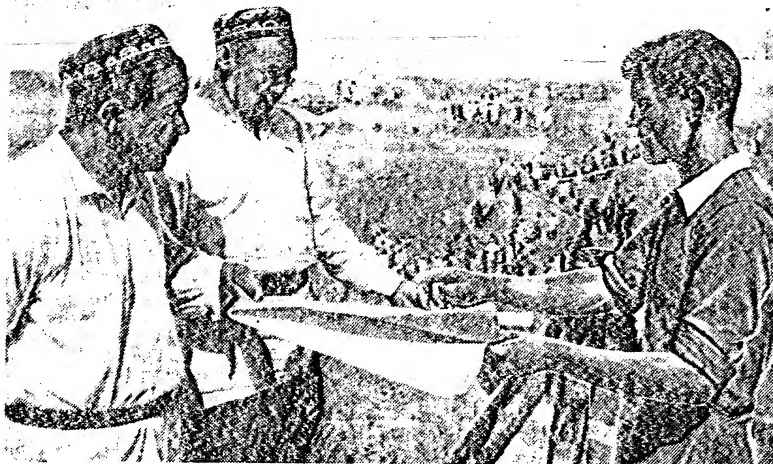
ONE OF the temporary dining rooms for the collective farmers who built the Ferghana Canal
—Photo by Shaikhet

The canal is the largest irrigation construction in the Soviet Union. It will be fed by the Naryn River, which has its source far away in the mountains of China and courses impetuously over Soviet land to the Aral Sea, into which it pours yearly 20,000 million cubic meters of water.

A reinforced concrete regulator at Uch-Kurgan marks the beginning of the canal, which flows the Uch-Kurgan River and to the Kara-Darya River, hence it crosses the plain for about 215 km. to the city of Amudarya in Tajikistan, where it ends.

As the canal intersects local irrigation canals and railways, a number of aqueducts, spillways and other structures, 1,300 in all, will be built. About 50 of these are to be of large size.

POOR was Central Asia in water and such as there was in the hands of the feudal lords, landed proprietors and rich ranchers, who kept the toilers of the land in bondage. The village populations were doomed to misery and extinction.



ACQUAINTING themselves with the progress on the canal are Kulikov, chairman of the Budgony Collective Farm (extreme left) and Tabburakhmanov, deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR (second from left)
—Photo by Shaikhet